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Ways of Masculinity in Online Dating Profiles: The Cases of Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es

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Ways of Masculinity in Online Dating Profiles: The cases of Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es

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Abstract

The analysis of masculinity has been a topic of growing interest in recent decades. Its study has incorporated a wide and diverse range of research areas and themes, including the representation of gender relations and identities on the Internet. Specifically, this article concerns the research area related to online dating websites and aims to compare the principal current tendencies related to identity -as provided by research on masculinity- with the way that men present themselves on two Spanish dating websites: Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es. These types of virtual spaces have specific characteristics that facilitate the analysis of the masculine ideal among their users; or at least the characteristics that these men consider attractive to women. This research was carried out through a qualitative analysis supported by Atlas-ti. The principal results highlight the presence of traces of the so called egalitarian masculinity within predominant forms of traditional masculinity, characterized by a minimal process of reflection and introspection on the part of users of these websites.

Keywords: dating websites, masculinity, Internet, gender, qualitative analysis

Formas de Masculinidad en los Perfiles de las Páginas Web de Citas: Los Casos de Meetic.es y AdoptaUnTio

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Resumen

El estudio de las masculinidades ha sido objeto de interés creciente en las últimas décadas. Su análisis ha ido abarcando una amplia diversidad de temáticas, incluyendo, entre las mismas, la representación en Internet de identidades y relaciones de género. Para este artículo se ha tomado como ámbito específico de investigación el constituido por las páginas web de citas. De esta forma, se han contrastado las principales tendencias en materia de identidad que destacan las aportaciones desarrolladas en el campo de estudio de las masculinidades con las presentaciones que hacen de sí mismos una muestra de hombres usuarios de dos páginas web de citas españolas: Meetic.es y AdoptaUnTio.es. Este tipo de espacios virtuales tiene particularidades específicas que facilitan el análisis del ideal de masculinidad de sus usuarios o, al menos, de las características que éstos consideran que resultan atractivas para las mujeres. La investigación se ha desarrollado a través de un análisis cualitativo, apoyado en el programa Atlas-ti. Entre los principales resultados, destaca la presencia de algunos rasgos relativos a las denominadas masculinidades igualitarias, dentro del predominio de formas tradicionales de masculinidad, caracterizadas por un mínimo proceso de reflexión e introspección por parte de los usuarios.

Palabras clave: páginas web de citas, masculinidades, Internet, género, análisis cualitativo.

Dating websites have grown in terms of the number of users and prestige in recent years, accompanied by the popularization of virtual social networks (Fullick, 2013). As of today, there are numerous online dating websites around the world that have become more diversified and specialized based on the preferences of their millions of users. While it is difficult to find reliable data on the number of people who use these websites, various studies have highlighted their continuous growth in terms of popularity (Ellison et al., 2006; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, online dating websites have lost much of the stigma they had in the past and are now widely used by a diverse group of people (Finkel et al., 2012).

Users of these websites are usually asked to fill out a brief personal profile. To produce this profile, users must engage in some kind of introspective work (Illouz, 2006) and at the same time design a strategy for integrating the qualities they consider most effective for finding a partner. This article focuses on the study of masculine identities as reflected in these profiles, taking as a sample an all-male group of users (seeking a female partner) from the websites Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es. The strategies they use in their profiles permit the analysis of the ideal characteristics of contemporary men, or at least of those characteristics (emotions, attitudes, behaviors, hobbies etc.) that they consider will be most attractive to women¹. In order to provide a foundation for this analysis, we present a summary of the theoretical framework and state of the art, which permits defining the principal characteristics of the tendencies and changes in contemporary masculinities. These tendencies will be compared with the profile strategies employed by users of the websites in question through a qualitative analysis.

The study of masculinities

The systematic analysis of the construction and representation of masculine identities is relatively recent and less common than the study of women's issues (Guasch, 2008). Somehow, the general androcentric nature of western culture and science has made gender invisible for men, in the same way that race is invisible for whites (Kimmel, 1993). As Gutmann explains

(1998, p.82), “masculinity is either ignored or considered to be the norm, such that (...) gender frequently refers to women and not to men”. It wasn’t until the end of the 1970’s that the specific study of masculinity began, originating the so called men’s studies (Carabí, 2000). This research field takes a constructionist approach in which male behavior is analyzed as socially and culturally attributed (Guttman, 1998).

Men’s studies have been developed principally in two research areas: on one hand there is the analysis of traditional masculinity, linked to power and domination, and on the other there is the study of changes and new forms of masculinity in postmodern societies (Portell & Pulido, 2012). In the first area, Pierre Bourdieu carried out an extensive analysis of masculine domination that posits that “the power of the masculine order manifests itself in the fact that it needs no justification: the androcentric vision is imposed as neutral and doesn’t feel the need to gain legitimacy through discourse” (Bourdieu, 2000, p 22). This affirmation can be related to his concept of habitus, explained as the way in which individuals naturalize certain aspects and conducts of society, in this case the situation of supremacy of men over women. From this perspective, masculinity is usually said to be constructed based on the image of the other: the feminine (Subirats, 2007).

Masculine domination is not only exercised by men towards women but also among men themselves (Kauffman, 1999). In the 1980’s Connell (1995) introduced the idea of hegemonic masculinity, adapting Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to gender relations. For the author, hegemonic masculinity functions as a cultural reference of what a man should be in a determined social context, reproducing the patriarchal structure of that context. This hegemonic masculinity functions as a framework of reference for men in terms of norms, attitudes and values that should be possessed to be considered men and to benefit from masculine privileges. While the hegemonic model exists, Connell poses the existence of other models that serve as counter-references. According to the author, gender structures are dynamic and contextual, and thus the hegemonic model is constantly absorbing values and aspects of non-hegemonic groups, in order to maintain the structure of patriarchal domination.

Norms associated with hegemonic masculinity usually indicate that men should be “important, active, autonomous, strong, powerful, rational, emotionally under control and heterosexual” (Coll-Planas & Missé, 2015,

p.416), combative, aggressive (Padrós, 2012), homophobic and sexist (Sanfélix, 2011). However, with the influence of feminisms and LGBT movements, these components of what it means to be a man have been polemicized and have resulted in changes in modern masculinities (Badinter, 1993). These transformations have been at the root of what diverse authors have proposed as the concept of “new masculinities” (Carabí & Segarra, 2000). The perspectives employed are diverse, although they usually coincide in signaling the heterogeneous character of contemporary vis-à-vis traditional masculinities (Carabí, 2000). In this sense, it is possible to differentiate the development of two general tendencies: one linked to the logic of consumer societies, hedonism and the cult of the body, and another linked to calls for equality in gender relations (Subirats, 2007).

The first tendency is characterized by a process of objectification of the male body, in much the same way as has happened with the female body. Mira (2015) carried out an analysis using Mark Simpson’s concept of the “Spornosexual male” about the overrepresentation of the physical-sexual attributes of men in the media, converting them into passive objects of pleasure. There does exist, in this way, a negative feminization of the masculine in pursuit of desire and specific canons of beauty, that provokes complexes and insecurities in men related to their bodies (Bordo, 1999). For some authors, this new model of masculinity is a product of marketing that -from an apparent image of gender equality- results in a process of asexualization in which both genders hold a single identity and personality directed towards consumption, making them into objects with market qualities (Hernandez Ochoa, 2011).

Meanwhile, the second tendency is related to the call for anti-homophobic and anti-sexist values (O’Neil, 2015), with fewer emotional restrictions (Lomas, 2013), and with the development of new models of paternity and assignment of roles and responsibilities (Johansson & Ottemo, 2013). These processes have been associated with terms such as positive masculinity (Duncanson, 2015) or inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2008). Duncanson (2015) suggests that positive masculinity is an adaptation of the hegemonic model that seeks to maintain masculine supremacy and predominance in society, but despite this, it supposes a transitory stage within the process of eradication of gender hierarchies,

forming what the author calls hybrid masculinities. On the other hand, Anderson (2008) observes that highly educated and middle class men have friendships with homosexual men and with women, breaking with certain classic taboos in which men could not have friendships with women and also belittled homosexuality. Peacock and Barker (2014) point out that many men have begun to understand that sexist behavior is counterproductive for them, which is promoting the appearance of organizations and men's groups around the world that advocate for new forms of masculinity. Furthermore, Lomas (2013) raises that it is possible that many of the elements of positive masculinities are in some contexts already part of hegemonic masculinity.

Online dating: state of the art

Sociological interest in the topic of online dating sites is -necessarily-recent, as is the popularization of these websites. However, there are already a good number of related studies, carried out in the last decade, that focus on different themes: the construction and representation of identities, the characteristics and preferences of site users, infidelity, the efficiency of these sites, pages for specific user groups, and differences between intimate relationships online and offline, etc.(Casemiro, 2014).

The analysis of identity representation is usually centered on the study of self-presentation in the profiles that users must construct, with two particularities of dating websites with respect to the rest of social media sites: the objective of these profiles and the way in which they are created (Illouz, 2006). The objective is usually to establish an offline encounter, which somewhat limits the possibility of showing an identity that differs from the reality. On the other hand, Illouz (2006) posits that the questionnaires that users fill out are created by experts and they are designed to reach an acceptable level of veracity. In this way these profiles of the self presumably suppose a task of introspection on the part of users (Gonzalez García, 2010).

According to Erving Goffman (2008), in general, when getting involved with each other, individuals try to give the best impression, and as such they present an idealized version of themselves. This idealized self is usually made up of the characteristics that are most accepted and valued in the corresponding context. Illouz (2006) claims that the users of online

websites not only present an idealized version of who they are or would like to be, they also do so in a generic way, given that the desired recipient is not a single individual but rather a diverse group of people. For this reason, standardized presentation strategies are used that make profiles quite uniform. Furthermore, the author affirms that these online spaces convert the individual into an object for consumption within a structured and categorized market. Users must define themselves in a competitive framework, in which they will have a greater chance of success if they adapt to the dominant norms of conduct.

In terms of the analysis of users' preferences when choosing a partner via these websites, different researchers have tried to signal the attractiveness factors (Hitsch et al., 2010). Thus, although some studies have highlighted the role of photos and physical characteristics (Morgan et al., 2010; Bak, 2010; Chappetta & Barth, 2016), other factors are also shown to be relevant such as personality (Morgan et al., 2010), an authentic or warm nature that inspires confidence and appears extroverted in the case of men, or appearing feminine with high self-esteem and not narcissistic in the case of women (Fiore et al., 2008). The significant differences between the results obtained in different researches could be related to the groups selected to be studied and the specific online dating sites used as sources of information.

Other studies have focused on the evolution and influence of online dating sites. In this area, Barraket and Henry-Waring (2008) analyzed the impact these sites have on how people meet each other, through in-depth interviews with a sample of users. Similarly, Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012) studied the evolution of the way couples are formed in the United States from 1940 to 2010. Looking at the past 15 years of the studied period, they observed an increase in the number of couples that meet via the Internet, and they analyzed the way in which this tool serves as a substitute for more traditional ways of finding a mate. The work of Chaulet (2009) is also worth noting. He analyzed the perception of trust in online dating websites through in-depth interviews. The author concludes that, even though in the past these sites suffered from a negative stigma, with the passing of time they have gained confidence and respect in society.

In a similar way to the present article, some of these studies have specifically adopted a gender perspective. Thus, for example, Martínez-

Lirola (2012) identified the communication strategies of male users of the social network Badoo.com, and found certain traditional elements, such as men taking the initiative and the expectation that women should be sweet and affectionate. Likewise, Marcus (2014) highlighted the representation of traditional gender stereotypes in which men showed themselves as hard workers and as active individuals with a passion for sport activities. Wang (2012) focused her attention on heterosexual users of a Thai dating website, and concluded that the online dating space permitted the representation of non-hegemonic models of masculinity, with the co-existence of multiple identities. These last conclusions are related to those obtained by Chappeta and Barth (2016), who found in a research on American students that users preferred profiles that did not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. However, the students in the sample were mostly interested in sporadic or short-term relationships. Along these lines, Walker and Eller (2016) carried out a comparative study of the profiles of heterosexual and homosexual men, concluding that there was a greater presence of traditional masculine discourse among homosexual men. Finally, Casemiro (2014) studied how identities were constructed on the website Meetic.com, observing the differences among men and women. The author found that men were more rational and practical in their representations than women, who were more emotional, reproducing traditional gender stereotypes.

Methodological notes

The selected websites

The sources of the secondary data for this research are the dating websites Meetic.es and AdoptaUnTio.es (AUT). These two webpages were chosen due to their popularity in Spain, their different models, and their orientation towards different publics. AUT is directed to young people, and Meetic, although focusing on a wide spectrum, takes a more serious approach that attracts older users.

Of French origin, Meetic was created in 2001 and claims (on its own website) to be a leader in the sector in Europe². AUT also originated in France and was created in 2008. In 2013 it expanded into the Spanish market and after a year had achieved a following of some 500,000 registered users. On both webpages³ users must create a profile that

highlights a main photo, together with smaller optional photos that the user can add. The rest of the elements of the profile are: name, age, physical characteristics and a description of one's personality and interests. The search for other users occurs through a search function in which age and geographic preferences can be selected. Other criteria that can also be added include physical appearance, interests and sociodemographic data.

Population and sample selection

The research population includes the self-presentation of the profiles of men looking for a female partner on the two aforementioned webpages. However, the geographic origin of users was limited to the area within a 50 km radius of the city of Alicante (Spain). This strategy was an attempt to provide for cultural and demographic similarities in the sample, in order to avoid, whenever possible, unidentified factors that could distort the results.

Given the qualitative approach of the study, we opted for sequential, non-probabilistic sampling, in which final cases were selected according to saturation criteria. The specific selection procedure was as follows:

1. Identification, through the search function of each website, of men attempting to contact women and who resided in Alicante or within a 50 km radius of the city.
2. The first 20 profiles that appeared on each website were selected.
3. The procedure was repeated on three different days: April 12, 13 and 20 of 2015. Through these three sessions, 120 profiles were collected.
4. Profiles were eliminated that were incomplete, or included an exceedingly brief or confusing description. This was the case for users that defined themselves only through several meaningless words such as: "The price doesn't matter as long as it's worth it" or "Legalize it".

After the first reading, analysis and comparison of the collected material, it was observed that it would be possible to achieve saturation of information with around 30 profiles per webpage. Thus, the definitive sample is made up of a total of 60 profiles. The ages of the users that make up the sample range from 21 to 64 years, with an average of 43 years for Meetic.es and 30 years for AUT.

Data analysis and presentation of results

A thematic qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was carried out of the self-presentations from the profiles of the 60 users selected for the sample. Atlas.ti software was used for support, to facilitate the process of coding the information. The coding process joined codes derived from the theoretical framework and inductive codes derived from the direct reading of the material (Valles, 2000).

In this sense, the aim of the analysis was not to quantify or make statistical inferences but rather to search for elements that could describe aspects of masculine identities contained within the sample. For this reason, it was decided that the research would only be carried out considering the texts, leaving aside the analysis of the photos, given the need to identify the process of self-reflection that the users supposedly have to carry out in using these online spaces.

The presentation of results here is organized according to the principal thematic areas detected, inserting phrases and expressions of the users. These text quotations are identified by indicating their webpage of origin (AUT or Meetic). Finally, results are discussed in terms of the related theoretical areas and the objectives of the study, leaving proposed future lines of research for the conclusions.

Results

After coding and comparing the texts of the profiles, it can be observed that they are usually constructed based on three axes: (1) description of the personality; (2) hobbies and interests; (3) qualities sought in a potential partner. The three components can appear interrelated in a single profile, and it is not always easy to differentiate them. In any case, these are the elements that structure the different presentations, as was also concluded in a study by Walker and Eller (2016)⁴.

Personality: sensitive or adventurous guys

Among all the analyzed profiles, only a little over half mentioned personality characteristics. This seems to reflect the lack of introspective

work on the part of a large portion of the sample. Furthermore, it is possible to speak of a generalized difficulty in terms of detailing the traits of one's own personality; indeed, some of the users did not even attempt it: "it is difficult to define oneself, it's true, I am a normal person, I think" (AUT-6). Among those who did, the majority opted for synthetic and brief formulas. In fact, the users often employed a very limited diversity of terms, which can be grouped into two categories:

A) Those adjectives that indicate a sensitive, affectionate or friendly character of the users: "friendly, joyful, intuitive, big hearted, accessible, hard worker, attentive" (AUT-25). Traits that could be related to a model of masculinity that is cordial and friendly.

B) Those other terms that show users as independent, adventurous and as entrepreneurs: "a guy with clear ideas, extroverted and adventurous, with a restlessness to try out new and surprising sensations" (AUT-23); "adventurous, crazy, talkative, daring..." (AUT-27). This adventurous spirit also appears when users describe their hobbies and interests.

Finally, the frequent use of the term "guy" should be highlighted when users present themselves in their profiles (compared to the infrequent use of other terms such as "man" or "person"): "I'm a guy who is separated, I don't have children, I am extroverted..." (Meetic-12). This formula seems to respond to the informal logic of this type of webpage. At the same time, it could be considered as a strategy that permits users to transmit a young character that is modern and relaxed.

Hobbies and interests: "living life"

A large part of the users opted to highlight their hobbies and interests as principal components of their profiles. In this sense, the mention of sport activities linked to an active and non-sedentary lifestyle is frequent: "I love sports, the beach, the unknown... the adventure of living life!!" (Meetic-1) "I like to practice sports. I'm a happy guy, I really like to travel" (AUT-19). Another area that appears frequently is linked to enjoyment of the social scene. Activities such as going out for a drink, having good conversations, being with friends or proclaiming the importance of friendship, are

elements that many users highlight: “I’m a normal guy that likes to go out, be with friends” (Meetic-25). These characteristics show the user as open, friendly and extroverted. It is also frequent to mention interest in film, music or literature, that in addition to being forms of entertainment can demonstrate the user’s interest in artistic and cultural issues: “I’m extroverted, friend of my friends, I like the cinema, taking a walk, going to dinner, travelling...” (Meetic-12) or “I like to write, I love reading, the cinema, travelling, water and winter sports, nature and the sea” (Meetic-17). These examples show the wide range of hobbies that some users include in their profiles and that define them as individuals that are active, extroverted and with certain cultural interests.

Just as in the case of the description of one’s personality, many of the profiles opt for brief texts that do not go into detail in terms of explaining hobbies and interests. In this sense, the minimal presence of activities related to the work or academic environment, home and family is worth noting, as they do not seem to be aspects valued as important in finding a partner on these webpages.

The sought partner: looking to share and have fun

In the majority of the profiles analyzed, there are allusions and comments about the type of relationship that is being sought and about the main characteristics of the women that these men want to contact. In this area, two themes can be differentiated: A) what is being sought in the potential partner; and B) the type of relationship they want to establish.

The ideal girl: sincere or fun-loving

When describing the woman with whom they want to make contact, the users primarily mention personality characteristics. Specifically, the presence of two semantic camps is worth highlighting. On one hand, being happy, friendly and fun-loving: “I guess I am looking for what everyone is looking for: someone who I can laugh with” (AUT-19); on the other hand, sincerity: “I like it when things are clear, and I like sincerity” (AUT-28). Significant differences between the two webpages can be observed in the description of these preferences: while users of AUT usually want a woman

with a fun-loving character, in Meetic.es the option of sincerity is more widespread.

Other traits, such as age or physical appearance are barely mentioned by the users: “I’m looking for a good person, attractive if possible...” (Meetic-15) or “If you are more or less attractive, between 48 and 57 years old...” (Meetic-30). Also little mentioned is the presence of characteristics such as being romantic, affectionate, passionate or independent, “authentic” and “with personality”. Furthermore, when trying to describe their ideal woman, users usually draw parallels with the traits they have used to describe themselves. They employ similar attributes, showing their preference for someone like them.

Type of relationship: serious or informal

In coherence with what has been shown in previous sections, reflections about the ideal couple relationship are not extensive. Furthermore, the type of relationship is mentioned less than are women’s personality characteristics. Even so, some relevant aspects can be highlighted. In this sense, the mention of the desire to share something with a possible partner is frequent among users: “I would like to find someone with whom to share, and enrich each other mutually” (Meetic-17). This type of commentary is more common on Meetic.es than on AUT and encompasses different possibilities that range from sharing “moments” (Someone with whom to share good moments” – Meetic-23) to “life” (“I’m a simple person looking for someone with whom to share my life” – Meetic-26). These expressions are the closest declarations of preferences for egalitarian sentimental relationships, although we have not detected the presence of comments explicitly related to this type of relationship.

Finally, it is on Meetic.es where a greater priority is shown for commitment and for serious and stable relationships: “I dream of sharing good times in a stable way with someone special” (Meetic-8). The explicit allusion to casual relationships is practically inexistent on both webpages, even if on AUT users avoid references to formal relationships and opt for a non-committal discourse: “I’m not looking for anything in particular. I’ve been in Alicante for a short time and I’m looking to meet people and get to

know the city. Any ideas are welcome, whether it's sports or social. I adapt to it all!" (AUT-29).

Discussion

The analysis of the selected sample shows a lack of reflection on the part of the users in terms of describing their own personalities. There is a clear preference for presenting themselves in a synthetic and repetitive way, instead of going into more detail and being original. This confirms what was described by Illouz (2006), that online dating spaces do not promote processes of reflection on the part of the subjects, who prefer to follow standardized forms of self-presentation. However, this could be related at the same time to characteristics of traditional masculinity, linked with a supposed limitation of men when it comes to expressing feelings or showing personal issues. This could also be interpreted as a strategy that users tend to develop, based more on the description of what they "do" as opposed to who they "are". In this sense they opt for an active masculine identity exemplified in characteristics like being extroverted and adventurous, that Marcus (2014) also found in the results of her study.

The limited diversity of our sample seems to contrast with the results obtained by Wang (2012), who identified the presence of a plurality of forms of masculinity. Thus, our study allows the grouping of most of the profiles into two categories: sensitive guys and adventurous guys. Both groups share traits that could be associated with traditional models of masculinity (primarily the apparent incapacity to express oneself in terms of identities and feelings). Despite this, there are also aspects that can be related to the concept of hybrid identities, in agreement with what has been suggested -in other areas- by authors such as Duncanson (2015). In this sense, the absence of aggressiveness and sexism, traditionally linked to masculine stereotypes, should be highlighted. Also, the direct mention of socioeconomic and work status is omitted among users, an aspect that contradicts the importance of these areas in other studies (Marcus, 2014; Walker & Eller, 2016). On the contrary, the profiles of various users show them as relatively open emotionally, with a preference for relationships based on friendship ties and the desire to share different dimensions of daily life with a woman. These results could reflect what is suggested by Lomas (2013) in terms of the fact that in determined contexts the hegemonic model of masculinity excludes features of the discursive forms

of traditional masculinity, giving rise to more fraternal identity styles. Certainly, we can see a relative adoption of some characteristics of the so called positive masculinities, although this is reflected primarily in the absence of several elements related to traditional masculinity and not so much in the explicit reference to issues such as equality between men and women.

On the other hand, users seem to shy away from referring to their bodies, both their own and those of their potential partner, which apparently contradicts prior studies that pointed out the importance of physical appearance in online dating, especially in the case of men (Morgan et al. 2010; Bak 2010). Thus, the fact that users do not describe their own physical appearance requires further study. It could be a strategy that they consider to be appropriate in the search for a female partner and, as such, it might not mean that they give no importance to their physical appearance. An analysis of the photographs could provide more information on this subject. For the moment, based on our data, we see the absence of elements related to the hedonistic tendency of masculinity that some authors have highlighted (Subirats, 2007) and that we pointed out in the theoretical framework.

Certainly, the users of our sample construct profiles formed by hybrid masculine identities. This hybrid takes on mixed forms of masculinity that bring together aspects of traditional masculinity -resistance to showing emotions, self-definition based on what they do as opposed to who they are, and preference for identification with active forms of masculinity-, with elements linked to egalitarian models of masculinity, without directly expressing their related values and premises. This hybrid of masculinities could be related to what was suggested by Connell (1995), in terms of the hegemonic model being in a constant process of change, with a dynamic structure that feeds itself with external and contradictory inputs. In this sense, we can concur with Duncanson's (2015) criticism of so called positive masculinity, by showing a model of being a man that has lost the traditional discourse but that still maintains many of its characteristics.

Conclusions and future areas of study

The analysis of our sample shows a group of men with apparent difficulties in engaging in a process of self-reflection about their own personalities. The majority of the online dating users opt to construct their profiles in a brief way with a synthetic format in which they mention their hobbies, preferences and activities, showing little introspection. This lack of reflection could be related to traits that are characteristic of traditional masculinity, but it could also be -as suggested by Illouz (2006) - related to the format of the dating websites. In conclusion, these aspects require further study both in terms of comparative research-using samples of men and women- and qualitative inquiries – interviewing users with the aim of understanding and interpreting the strategies that are put into practice in these virtual spaces. In fact, a comparative research involving the actors' point of view, would allow to overcome the static perspective of the present investigation, and to adopt a relational and dynamic approach.

Among the profiles analyzed, there is a combination of characteristics from the different tendencies in current masculinities described by prior authors. This hybrid nature presents certain elements of homogeneity (such as the schematic and brief structure of the profiles) and a relative heterogeneity marked by the different traits, hobbies and interests of the users. Thus, we can differentiate a group of profiles that adopt sensitive and fraternal models of masculinity and that can be related to the tendencies of positive masculinity. Meanwhile, other profile strategies focus on elements of leisure, physical activity and adventure which permits linking the users with certain elements both of traditional and hedonistic masculinity, albeit without direct references to physical appearance. The analysis of the presence of hedonistic tendencies could benefit from future research that includes photographic material in addition to the study -through interviews- of the authors' interpretations of their own profiles.

Notes

¹ In this regard, the article does not propose a research on online masculine identities, but simply the information available through online dating websites has been considered as a valuable material for an approach to the analysis of contemporary masculinities. Obviously, the analyzed sample is not representative of the general population, but it can still allow the study of those features that male users of an increasingly socially accepted virtual space deploy in the attempt to find a female partner.

² <https://www.meetic.es> [accessed on 29/11/2016].

³ <https://www.adoptauntio.es/> [accessed on 29/11/2016]

⁴ Walker and Eller (2016) identified a fourth axis, with the inclusion of the professional dimension. In our study, however, economic and work-related aspects are not explicitly mentioned.

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